

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for marking and tracking a multiplicity of hospital instruments
2 comprising:
3 a. marking at least 2 hospital instruments with an optically
4 scannable mark indicative of each instrument's manufacturer or
5 service provider and indicative of a serial number unique to each
6 instrument;
7 b. reading each mark and entering serial number and manufacturer
8 information represented by each mark into a computer database;
9 c. using one or more of the instruments to perform one or more
10 hospital procedures; and
11 d. entering information into the database that identifies each
12 hospital procedure in which each instrument has been used.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said marking is performed with a laser,
2 an ink jet, or an acid etch.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said reading and entering comprises
2 scanning with an optical scanner electrically coupled to the database.
- 1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the optical scanner is portable.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the scannable marks further
2 comprises information indicative of the part number of each instrument.

1 6. The method of claim 5, further comprising inputting a maintenance
2 schedule for each instrument into the database.

1 7. The method of claim 6, further comprising retrieving maintenance
2 schedule information from the database, and performing maintenance
3 on each of said instruments according to the maintenance schedule
4 entered into the database.

1 8. The method of claim 7, further comprising entering information into the
2 database identifying the maintenance procedure performed on each
3 instrument.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising entering information into said
2 database specifying the maximum number of permitted uses for each
3 instrument.

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the database is a relational database.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the database is accessible at multiple
2 data entry and retrieval locations.

1 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the database is accessible in a
2 computer network.

1 13. A method for marking, tracking and maintaining a multiplicity of hospital
2 instruments comprising:

- 3 a. marking at least 2 hospital instruments with an optically
- 4 scannable mark indicative of each instrument's manufacturer or
- 5 service provider and part number, and indicative of a serial
- 6 number unique to each instrument;
- 7 b. reading each mark and entering part number, serial number and
- 8 manufacturer information conveyed by each mark into a
- 9 computer database;
- 10 c. using one or more of the instruments to perform one or more
- 11 hospital procedures;
- 12 d. entering information into the database that identifies the serial
- 13 number of each instrument and each hospital procedure in which
- 14 it has been used;
- 15 e. inputting a maintenance schedule for each instrument into the
- 16 database;
- 17 f. retrieving maintenance schedule information from the database;
- 18 and
- 19 g. performing maintenance on each of the instruments according to
- 20 the maintenance schedule entered into the database.

1 14. The method of claim 13, further comprising entering information into the
2 database identifying the maintenance procedure performed on each
3 instrument.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein said part number is indicative of
2 designated instrument groupings.

1 16. The method of claim 13, wherein said reading and entering is
2 performed with a portable optical scanner coupled to transfer data to
3 said computer database.

1 17. A method for marking, tracking and maintaining a multiplicity of hospital
2 instruments and for auditing instrument maintenance comprising:

- 3 a. marking at least 2 hospital instruments with an optically
- 4 scannable mark indicative of each instrument's manufacturer and
- 5 part number, and indicative of a serial number unique to each
- 6 instrument;
- 7 b. reading each mark with an optical scanner;
- 8 c. transmitting part number, serial number and manufacturer
- 9 information conveyed by each mark from the scanner to a
- 10 computer database;
- 11 d. using one or more of the instruments to perform one or more
- 12 hospital procedures;
- 13 e. entering information into the database that identifies the serial
- 14 number of each instrument and each hospital procedure in which
- 15 it has been used;
- 16 f. inputting a maintenance schedule for each instrument into the
- 17 database;
- 18 g. retrieving maintenance schedule information from the database;
- 19 h. performing maintenance on one or more of the instruments;
- 20 i. entering information into the database identifying the
- 21 maintenance procedure performed on each instrument; and
- 22 j. retrieving maintenance history and schedule information for one
- 23 or more instruments and determining whether scheduled

1 maintenance has been performed in a timely manner on the
2 instruments or whether the instrument should be replaced.

1 18. The method of claim 17 wherein said determining comprises comparing
2 the maintenance schedule for a particular instrument to the
3 maintenance history for the same instrument.

4 19. The method of claim 17 wherein said database contains information
5 regarding the maximum number of permitted uses for each instrument
6 and said determining comprises comparing the maximum number of
7 permitted uses for a particular instrument to the usage history for the
8 same instrument.

1 20. The method of claim 17, wherein said retrieving is performed from a
2 data terminal remotely located from the database.

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